SPATIAL DEIXIS
AS A WAY TO COMPARE LANGUAGES

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According to Lyons (1968):

By **deixis** is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about or referred to, in relation to the spatio-temporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker or at least one addressee.

Spheres of Deixis

Personal. Refer to the participants of speaking act (speaker-addressee), often by means of personal pronouns (e.g. the use of honorific forms in Russian).

Temporal. Refer to the moment of an event relatively to the speaking act by means of adverbs (*now, then, yesterday*, etc.)

Spatial. Refer to spatial locations relevant to the utterance mostly by demonstratives (e.g. **this** *cat is bigger than* **that** *one*).

For this research spatial deixis was chosen.

Distance Contrast in Demonstratives	Representation (languages)
No distance contrast	7
Two-way distance contrast	127
Three-way distance contrast	88
Four-way distance contrast	8
Five (or more)-way distance contrast	4
TOTAL	234

from Diessel (2013)

ADYGHE PROFILE

(based on *Ethnologue*)

Population: 117,500 in Russia (2010 census)

Classification: North-West Caucasian

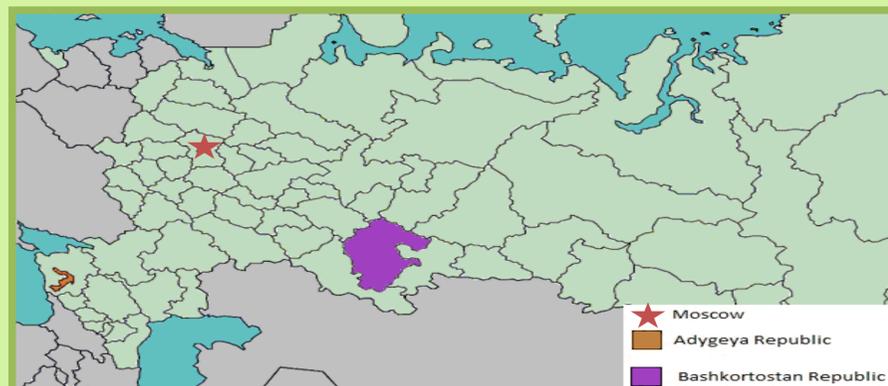**Deictic stems detected:** 4

BASHKIR PROFILE

(based on *Ethnologue*)
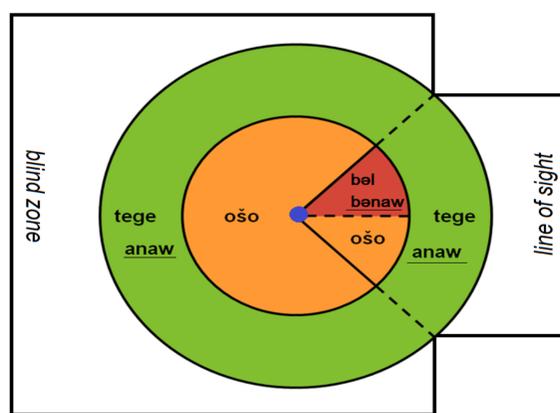
Population: 1,150,000 in Russia (2010 census)

Classification: Altaic, Turkic
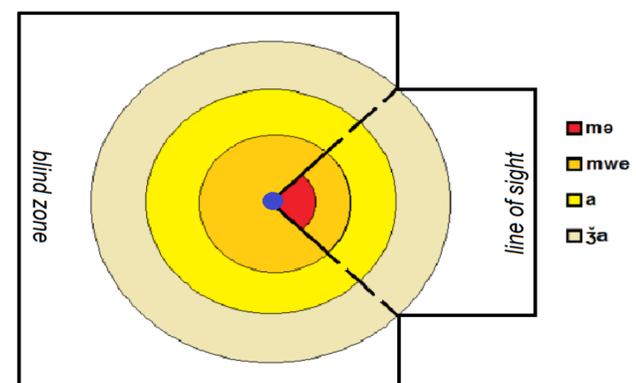
Deictic stems detected: 7

Moscow
Adygeya Republic
Bashkortostan Republic

Bashkir

Adygh

The aim

To find out how the deictic stem is attached to a certain latitude and what are the conditions for its use.

Methods

➢ **Space games** (proposed by Language and Cognition Department of Max Planck Institute for psycholinguistics (more on http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl))
➢ **Questionnaire** (checking factors)
➢ **Spontaneous answers**
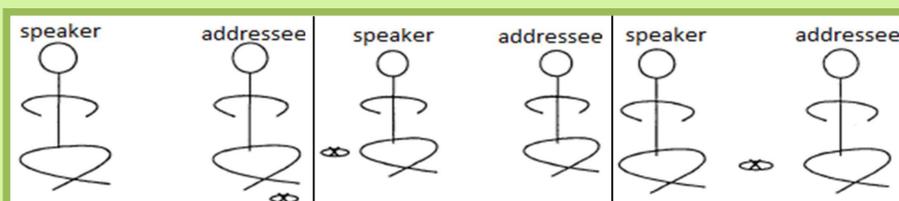
Annotation to the diagrams above

The **blue dot** is the deictic center (here the speaker).

The **red zone** in both languages is responsible for closest objects in the line of sight. The **orange zone** is for close objects that could be emphasized by gesture or pointing (with finger or palm).

The **rest of the zones** (green in Bashkir, and yellow and beige in Adygh) are for remote objects. **Underlined** words are used only in spoken language.

The result: The conditions for each deictic word are different in different languages. The universal questionnaire should be proposed in order to compare the languages according to a basic set of external and internal conditions.

finding the deictic center (from Wilkins (1999))

Typologically Significant Factors

✓ Distance/Remoteness

✓ Gestures or pointing

✓ Visibility

✓ Deictic center

✓ Diachronic aspect

Rare Features (according to Diessel (1999)):

❑ Elevation (9 languages out of 85)

❑ Geography (3 languages out of 85)

❑ Movement (2 languages out of 85)

References

Diessel 1999 – H. Diessel. Demonstratives form, function, and grammaticalization. Amsterdam, 1999.

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Lyons 1968 – J. Lyons. Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics. London: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

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